

Good evening members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Christian Villette, and I am a current Communications Major at Housatonic Community College. I have lived in Bridgeport for 14 years and although I thought about going to other colleges, the cost of attending the community college really helped me decide to go to HCC. It is an honor for me to appear before you tonight.

I mentioned that Housatonic was affordable, but part of what is helping me to attend school are benefits that my parents have earned for me from their military service. My mother served as a Marine until she had me, and my father continues to serve as a Marine. I really appreciate their support and their service. When I graduated from High School, I really wanted to attend school, but I did not think I had the funds to attend college. I continued to work then, and even when I am attending HCC I still work.

When I first arrived at school, I thought about majoring in computer science, but I realized my passion and my strengths fall in the Communication area. I really enjoy my conversations with people, and I have a memory for remembering who different people are --- and what they have said to me. My goal is to graduate in 2024 and attend a four-year university. When I started, I was going to class physically, and it wasn't until a year later that we moved off campus, and our faculty and staff started talking to us about a hybrid format. I liked splitting my time with online classes, but now I am back in the HCC buildings. The faculty, staff, and tutors help me get through the adversities of the college process. I know that as long as I work hard, and get the supports I need, I am going to continue to be successful.

I have recently joined the HCC Equity Project, a program that mentors students and pays attention to the stress we may be feeling from our outside life or our academics. Faculty and staff

leaders of the school plan activities that are helpful and fun. I really appreciate getting to know HCC's Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Smith, who I have had many conversations with on campus.

I am taking a math class, a creative writing class, and a public speaking class. Can you guess which is my favorite? Yes - - it is public speaking. I would like to say a couple of things about the consolidation to the one college model. On the pro side, I understand that if I wanted to take a class at another campus it would make it easier, and I would not have to spend money registering again. On the con side, I am wondering in the future how it will affect what my degree - - - and although I understand community colleges have declining enrollments, I still want to make sure that you all financially support the thousands of students like me who attend Connecticut community colleges.

Thank you for allowing me to use my voice tonight and for all of the support you give our college students in Connecticut. I really appreciate you all giving students the opportunity to speak tonight. Thank you and have a good night.